

# **DEVELOPING ALLIANCES THROUGH REGIONAL DEFENSE ENVIRONMENTAL COOPERATION: BUILDING ON SUCCESSES ON THE BALTIC SEA REGION**

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## **OVERVIEW**

The Baltic Sea region defense environmental cooperation is a model for United States support to other regions of the world. The U.S can assist countries by addressing their regional environmental and security issues for a very small investment. In return, the US has the opportunity to build new security alliances, improve international perceptions of the US and increase training and readiness options.

Water is a common resource and border in the Baltic and many other regions of the world. Countries sharing water resources understand their interdependence. Military impact on the environment is a significant concern within this context.

Countries of the Baltic Sea region, together with Georgia, Romania, the United Kingdom and the US have developed a Baltic Sea Region defense environmental cooperation organization, "BALTDEC" (also known as the "Riga Initiative"). BALTDEC promotes defense environmental cooperation in the region with the overall goal of sustainable use and development, without hindering military readiness. As in other regions of the world, countries with limited cooperation on other issues have been willing to interact on defense environmental issues. BALTDEC meets the need for sharing experiences, resources and expertise in the Baltic Sea region on defense environmental issues.

Environmental assistance is almost universally appreciated and viewed positively by the public. The US has learned many environmental lessons that can potentially be shared with other countries through training and other environmental assistance. Despite successful progress, there are many more training needs and opportunities on a wide range of topics in the Baltic and other regions.

The US can offer significant help that can yield new cooperation and alliances. The regional cooperation nurtured by defense environmental programs can contribute to regional stability and US national interests.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This paper presents recent Baltic Sea region defense environmental cooperation as a model for similar cooperation in other regions of the world. In this type of cooperation the U.S assists countries by addressing their regional environmental and security issues for a very small investment. In return, the US has the opportunity to build new security alliances, improve

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international perceptions of the US and to improve opportunities for training access and readiness.

Despite centuries of wars and political divisions, the countries surrounding the Baltic Sea are connected by the sea as a common border and resource. Therefore, they are mutually impacted by environmental damage to the Baltic Sea. The countries of the region recognize that they cannot act independently without affecting their neighbors. One of the main environmental concerns of the region is each country's military impact on the Baltic Sea. As a result, the countries of the Baltic Sea region, together with Georgia, Romania, the United Kingdom and the US have developed a Baltic Sea Region defense environmental cooperation organization, "BALTDEC" (also known as the "Riga Initiative"). BALTDEC promotes defense environmental cooperation in the region with the overall goal of sustainable use and development, without hindering military readiness. As in other regions of the world, countries with limited cooperation on other issues have been willing to interact on defense environmental issues. BALTDEC meets the need for sharing experiences, resources and expertise in the Baltic Sea region on defense environmental issues.



**Figure 1, The Baltic Sea Region.<sup>1</sup>**

One of the main goals of BALTDEC is to "exchange experiences on the military expert level . . . conducting joint defense environmental projects would contribute to building up confidence and promote peace and stability and ecological sustainability in the Baltic Sea Region."<sup>2</sup> BALTDEC provides a forum for joint discussions regarding defense environmental coordination and cooperation. The work is on an informal basis and participation is voluntary.

## **BALTIC BACKGROUND**

This history of Baltic defense environmental cooperation is intended to illustrate the progress that could be made in other regions and the steps that such programs go through as they mature. BALTDEC had its roots in a successful Baltic/Swedish/US defense environmental training program that began in 1999 and concluded in 2003. Sweden and the US were interested in helping the newly independent Baltic States become stable democracies and assist in their NATO and EU aspirations. This program was consistent with Robert Dunaway's 1995 observation that "US presidents and policy makers have stressed the importance of helping Russia and the Newly Independent States develop democratic forms of government and forge strong economic and environmental ties with other nations throughout the world."<sup>3</sup>

Swedish and US experts, in cooperation with Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian specialists, created a suite of three courses for the Baltic militaries. These three levels of environmental training courses served the needs of all three Baltic States and eventually several other countries. This program was successful to the point that the Baltic States now conduct and maintain their own military environmental training programs. After a series of pilot projects in each country, all three have also completed base management plans for at least one of their military installations. As a result, the Baltic governments developed environmental policies for the military sector and placed military and civilian staff in positions to manage environmental training and compliance with environmental policies and regulations consistent with NATO and EU standards.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Riga Initiative**

The idea of a regional defense environmental conference was first suggested by the Latvian Ministry of Defense in 2000. Through its leadership, and with support from Estonia, Lithuania, Sweden and the US, Latvia hosted the first organizational meeting in September 2001.

More than 40 representatives from all Baltic Sea region states, as well as the US participated in the international forum. During the course of the seminar a number of areas were raised in which cooperation could be developed not only between the Baltic States' military sectors, but also involving other Baltic Sea region states. This would not only facilitate the preservation of a cleaner and safe Baltic Sea environment, but also support mutual understanding and political stability in the region. Among the possible areas of cooperation mentioned were; the formulation of joint environmental protection provisions and regulations for the Baltic States military sectors, formulation of military base environmental management plans, civil-military cooperation in the resolution of issues, environmental education and training of military personnel, and research of polluted areas.<sup>5</sup>

In continuing the initiative it began, the Latvian Ministry of Defense, with support from the US National Guard, hosted the next seminar of this type which became the second annual

“Baltic Environmental/ Military Cooperation Conference”, in Riga in August 2002. The conference was dedicated to cooperation in the environmental protection area among the Baltic States, the countries of the Baltic Sea region and the US. More than 60 participants from 14 countries (Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Romania, Russia, Ukraine, the U.K. and the US), as well as from NATO Headquarters, took part in the event.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 2, Delegates at the 2002 Baltic Environmental Military Conference in Riga, Latvia**

At the 2002 conference, Tracy Jacobson, Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy to Latvia, noted that no other geographic region’s militaries were discussing environmental cooperation in this way. Results of this conference included a consensus was that a Baltic-wide military environmental cooperation strategy was needed to prevent duplication of effort, ensure optimum use of scarce environmental resources (personnel and funds) and to provide for information exchange. Representatives indicated potential ability to sit on an informal steering committee of 5-6 persons and their country’s point of contact. The committee, known as the Informal Secretariat, would be responsible for refining the strategy, leading it through a process into a formal document ratified at an appropriate political level, and organizing the next conference. This cooperative effort became known as “The Riga Initiative”.<sup>7</sup>

Lithuania hosted the next Riga Initiative Plenary Meeting in October 2003 in Vilnius. The purpose of the meeting was to reach expert-level agreement on; the Baltic Sea Region Defense Environmental Cooperation Strategy, the appropriate level of approval for the strategy, future work arrangements and a governing structure.

The Vilnius Meeting confirmed the basic mutual understanding among the Baltic Sea region countries and other interested countries regarding the need of defense environmental cooperation in the region. The delegates agreed that lessons learned in other defense environmental co-operation, such as the Arctic Military Environmental Co-operation (AMEC), should be considered in future work. Representatives at the expert level agreed on the proposed

Strategy and Work Arrangements, including a few amendments. The Informal Secretariat took the responsibility for pursuing a political decision on the Strategy. Delegates also agreed that plenary meetings should be arranged every 12-24 months. Estonia offered to host the next meeting in 2005. The Informal Secretariat was established with members from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and with Sweden holding the chairmanship.<sup>8</sup>

Key objectives of the BALTDEC strategy include:

- Establish a foundation for active defence environmental co-operation in the Baltic Sea region.
- Structure the foundation as a forum sharing experiences on common issues, promoting bilateral and multilateral defence environmental agreements and work in the Baltic Sea region.
- Regional co-ordination in order to promote efficient use of resources and to avoid duplication of efforts.
- Promote defence environmental projects that can be used as models in other countries in the region.
- Promote development of environmental knowledge and skill among military personnel at all levels, creating environmentally friendly and aware Armed Forces in the region without jeopardising their main military function.
- Promote defence sector transparency and ensure close relationship and mutual understanding between military and civilian sectors in defence environmental work in the region.
- Promote peace and stability in the Baltic Sea region through continuous cooperation between military and civilian experts and organisations of different countries.
- Promote cooperation with existing environmental organizations in the region and within the European Union and NATO.
- Share views and experiences on regional co-operation in this field and encourage other regions to develop regional and trans-regional co-operation.<sup>9</sup>

At the most recent plenary meeting in April 2005 held in Tallinn, the agenda included finalizing the BALTDEC structure and operating procedures, rotating leadership positions, reporting on the formal approval of the strategy by member governments, technical presentations, and technology for sharing information.

The BALTDEC structure is fairly simple and efficient. It consists of the Informal Secretariat (IS) with delegates or points of contact (POCs) representing each country. The Informal Secretariat conducts business between plenary meetings, keeps the POCs informed and plans the next plenary meeting. Between the plenary meetings, the POCs interact directly with each other on projects and update the “BALTDEC Basics” inventory of projects. Delegates at the Tallinn plenary session adopted operating procedures (“Terms of Reference”) for the IS to make the Secretariat work more transparent and hopefully involve more people in active work.



**Figure 3, Delegates at the 2005 BALTDEC Plenary meeting in Tallinn, Estonia**

One of the main accomplishments of this year's meeting in Tallinn was the political acceptance of the strategy among the BALTDEC participating countries. As of summer 2005, 11 of 14 countries have formally approved the strategy. Mr. Jonas Hjelm, State Secretary of the Swedish MOD, summarized the progress by stating that “there is an obvious political acceptance regarding the Strategy and that this political endorsement forms an excellent basis for future work.”<sup>10</sup> Of the three countries that did not endorse the strategy, two of them are on the way to endorsement. It is important to note that even countries that did not politically endorse the strategy are still welcome to participate in the BALTDEC work. The formal political endorsement is important because in the past, much of the cooperation of the organization has been personality driven. As membership in the Informal Secretariat and the chair rotate, much of the success of the organization will rest on the countries continuing their participation, not just committed individuals.

### **Current Situation**

BALTDEC is in a time of transition. The following are some small examples of the maturation process. The funding of plenary sessions is apparently no longer dependent on US or Swedish help. In 2005 for the first time, the IS did not ask the US POC for help in writing the proceedings. The original POCs and IS members have begun rotating, with Sweden stepping down this year and Estonia taking over as the Chair. Sweden feels like they have done enough to get the organization off the ground and that it is time for the Baltic countries to take on leadership of the organization. Denmark and the US have been invited to join the IS.

Finally, and most significantly, BALTDEC is shifting its attention from organizational issues to the “BALTDEC Basics” inventories – the heart of BALTDEC purpose. These inventories list projects in five categories; completed, ongoing, future, short-term needs and long-term needs. Any participating country is free to list projects as a way of sharing information or asking for partners or help. Each project listing includes information such as a description, project type, time frame, countries involved, result or purpose, and point of contact. The current inventory has 41 current, planned or proposed projects, many in need of a partner country or some technical expertise. As the IS Chair, Mr. Johan Appelberg stated in his conclusion in Tallinn, “It is time to start implementing the Strategy, to start concrete work according to the Strategy.”<sup>11</sup>

### **Outlook for the Future**

Until now, the BALTDEC Basics inventories consisted of a series of spreadsheets emailed to POCs, updated and emailed back to the IS. Currently the goal is to develop a BALTDEC Basics website that will allow some information to be shared globally, and other information to be shared within BALTDEC. The website would ease the transfer and sharing of information and continue to emphasize cooperative activities.

At Tallinn, the next three plenary sessions were tentatively scheduled. Sweden made an offer to host the next meeting in 2006 or early 2007. Denmark has offered to host the following meeting in 2008. Finally, Finland has offered to host the 6<sup>th</sup> Plenary Meeting in approximately 2010, ensuring host countries for the next five years of plenary meetings.

Until now the organization has cooperated very smoothly because of common goals and like-minded individuals. As BALTDEC continues to mature, this may not always be the case. As one delegate wondered aloud in Tallinn, “Is this group ready for disagreements?” However, these doubts are overshadowed by the steady progress the Riga Initiative has made both internally and through cooperation with other organizations. The BALTDEC Basics inventory lists numerous completed projects and seminars. Since 1999, Baltic, and later BALTDEC, representatives have participated in the annual US European Command Partnership for Peace Environmental Conferences. These and other accomplishments have earned BALTDEC international recognition. For example, in June 2005 Ms. Ilona Ekmane of the Latvian MOD made a presentation on BALTDEC at the Ambassadors’ meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The Riga Initiative was well received and the ambassadors requested a regular exchange of information between BALTDEC and OSCE to help prevent duplication of effort.<sup>12</sup>

## **ENVIRONMENTAL SECURITY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

Environmental security is one of many significant challenges facing every region of the world. Professor Adil Najam from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University emphasizes environmental security challenges by stating, “the wrong end of a smokestack can be as much of a security concern to humans as the barrel of a gun.”<sup>13</sup> BALTDEC addresses environmental security and the balance between the “smokestack” and the “barrel of the gun.” Mr. Jaak Joeruut, Estonia’s Minister of Defense, summed up BALTDEC’s challenge by asking “to what extent can defense policy interfere with environmental policy and still defend the people?”<sup>14</sup>

### **Factors Shaping Future Alliances**

Environmental security issues are among those that the US can address to shape future alliances; both helping other countries and serving national security. These issues begin to define needs that the US can help meet. Regional issues such as pollution, economic development, water and other critical resources, tend to be repeated across many regions of the world. These are opportunities for confidence and security building measures in different regions where the US could play a third party role. Environmental security assistance is low-threat, low-cost and welcome, allowing the US to build relationships in the military arena with and between countries, as exemplified by US environmental training and base management planning assistance in the Baltic. As in the formation of BALTDEC, the US can help with encouragement, relatively small amounts of seed money and expertise, to leverage regional issues into regional cooperation. Current examples of proposed modest US assistance to the Baltic States include noise modeling and geographic information systems (GIS) training and implementation into the base planning process.

### **Regional Partners**

One way the US can be more effective in developing new relationships in a region is to work with a regional partner to assist other countries, as the US did with Sweden in the Baltic. This helps foster cooperation within the region and prevents the appearance of a dominant US telling other countries what to do. In working with our Swedish counterparts, the authors discovered that the US and Swedish defense environmental training and programs were very similar. The enhanced relationship with the regional partner, such as non-NATO member Sweden, can be an important benefit in addition to the other new regional relationships.

### **Water as an Opportunity for Security Building Measures**

The Baltic Sea region and other regions proposed for similar programs, such as the Black Sea, are defined by a common body of water. Gourisankar Ghosh, executive director of the

Geneva-based Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) believes that water can be a major instrument that can help bring people and governments together, cutting across political boundaries. He says that the positive side to globalization is the breaking down of national boundaries, resulting in the need for the concept of shared water.<sup>15</sup> The U.S can use the critical regional environmental issue of water to promote conflict prevention, multilateral cooperation, and confidence in the Baltic Sea region and other regions of the world.

According to Aaron Wolf and his co-authors in their article “Water Can be a Pathway to Peace, Not War,” water is a greater opportunity for cooperation than conflict in the world’s international basins. The Baltic Sea Region is an excellent example of this. Countries that would not usually cooperate so well on other topics have built productive relationships through addressing common environmental issues. Wolf et al. continue, stating that “Water cooperation forges people-to-people or expert-to-expert connections.”<sup>16</sup> For example, BALTDEC includes environmental defense experts from NATO and non-NATO countries, former Soviet republics and Russia who cooperate on environmental issues that surpass borders.

The Baltic States and their partners in BALTDEC have already made significant progress in defense environmental issues concerning water. In 2002 an international Baltic Sea naval exercise included an oil spill and coordinated response as part of the scenario. With international assistance, Latvia has built a Baltic diving school and hosted an international Buried Sea Mine Symposium and an international seminar on Environmental Protection at Naval Installations and Onboard Naval Ships, both in Riga, in 2005.

Water concerns in the Baltic region include rivers and associated watersheds, special habitats such as the Curonian Lagoon in Lithuania, and the Baltic Sea itself. Many of the environmental issues in the Baltic are similar to issues the U.S has in the Great Lakes. Both are vast watersheds that are affected by large human populations, diverse usages and influenced by multiple and international government agencies. A cooperation effort known as the Great Lakes Baltic Sea Partnership addresses the similarities. The partnership is committed to improving the water quality of the Great Lakes and the Baltic Sea by sharing information, expertise, and management approaches.<sup>17</sup>

The U.S can use water to promote conflict prevention and cooperation in other regions of the world as well. In a paper about the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, Prof Olcay Unver of Kent State University says that despite the political volatility of the issue, shared water resource management between Turkey, Syria, and Iraq may promote international cooperation, not interstate conflict, in the coming decade. Professor Unver argues that with the change in regime

in Iraq and the potential opening of Syria, now may be an appropriate time to focus on cross-boarder water issues as a catalyst for regional cooperation.<sup>18</sup>

### **Strategies to Shape Perceptions of the US**

As the US works in multiple regions around the world, it can choose to have a low-key or a more public presence depending on national security goals and regional sensitivities. In some regions where a quieter US role is more appropriate, low-key involvement can be effective by improving perceptions and establishing working relationships with technical and government counterparts. If the regional governments or the US prefer little or no awareness by the general public of American involvement, the US can still provide financial support for a course or conference, while the host country and participating nations receive positive publicity.

In other regions, a more public role can improve the perception of the US with the general public. This could involve US military participation through environmental training of other military services, public US leadership and funding of a program, or the US hosting international participants for a conference or training. A small example of positive perception of the US is that because of the American track record in the Baltic region, the US has been invited to join the BALTDEC Informal Secretariat.

One aspect of improving perceptions of the US is that through environmental training and assistance, the US can actually contribute to environmental compliance in other countries, building goodwill with regional countries and their environmental groups. The US can promote environmental compliance through its own record and through training in areas such as military responsibility for environmental stewardship. This could enhance cooperation at our overseas installations on environmental issues that affect US readiness and training. The US can take satisfaction in developing relationships and contributing to programs that improve common environmental quality. But friendly and productive relationships in the defense environmental arena can also positively influence issues such as US military over-flights, transit access to installations and basing.

### **Delivering Environmental Assistance through Interagency Teams**

The authors' experience is with the Air Force as part of interagency teams delivering US environmental assistance and expertise. In addition to the Air Force, these teams have included experts from the Environmental Protection Agency, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Guard Bureau and the State Department. This interagency approach was very effective in assembling a multidisciplinary team with the right combination of expertise and experience. These types of teams may not be business as usual for all the participating agencies. But just as the US military strives to become more "joint" in its operations, the US government can learn to

effectively coordinate US foreign and security policy in various regions by promoting better interagency cooperation. In particular, partnerships between DoD, EPA, and the State Department, make sense for regional defense environmental projects. Based on the authors' experience, this kind of cooperation already seems to work well at the Embassy level in-country. But at the agency level back in the US, obstacles to participation seem to arise whether because of turf battles, limited funding, or incompatible regulations. There is room for improvement on this issue.

### **POTENTIAL APPLICATION IN OTHER REGIONS**

There are a number of regions around the world where the successes and lessons learned from the Riga Initiative can be applied to improve defense environmental cooperation. Because many regions already have environmental cooperation in place, the defense sector could expand upon work that is already in motion. The following section describes some organizations in other regions that cooperate on environmental issues. These recommendations are not necessarily new ideas, but the authors present them to stimulate interest and discussion of possibilities.

Before discussing new opportunities, another successful defense environmental cooperation program that should be noted is the Arctic Military Environmental Cooperation (AMEC), between Norway, Russia, the U.K. and the US. Since 1996, AMEC has conducted technology demonstration projects with the primary focus on protecting the sensitive arctic environment from radioactive contamination that could leak from decommissioned Russian Northern Fleet nuclear submarines. The main concern is pollution (radioactive and non-radioactive) of prime fishing grounds. According to Dieter K. Rudolph, the US AMEC Program Director, "AMEC has proven to be a highly successful, practical and accountable means of assisting with the reduction in Russian Naval Nuclear forces in direct support of US National security interests."<sup>19</sup> Within the US, AMEC was an interagency effort led by the Department of Defense and supported by the Environmental Protection Agency and the Department of Energy. Total funds for AMEC, well over \$100 million so far, dwarf any other defense environmental program described or proposed here.<sup>20</sup>

One obvious region to consider for a BALTDEC type program is the Black Sea. Georgia, Romania and Ukraine have already demonstrated their interest by participating in BALTDEC as observer countries since 2003. BALTDEC delegates from both Georgia and Romania have explicitly stated their interest in a similar program in the Black Sea region. The Black Sea certainly has its share of environmental issues with its heavy oil industry. Each of the three countries above is very interested in emulating the success or the Baltic States in developing their economies and integration with the west. The other countries sharing the Black Sea shores are Bulgaria, Turkey and Russia. Turkey or Russia are potential partner countries with the U.S in building such a program. Turkey has experience in negotiating water issues with Iraq and Syria.<sup>21</sup>



**Figure 4, The Black Sea Region.**<sup>22</sup>

Much of the current literature on water conflict and cooperation is focused on the Middle East. Several countries in the region, surprisingly including Israel, have been quietly cooperating for years. According to Wolf et al, “Israel and Jordan held secret “picnic table” talks to manage the Jordan River since 1953, even though they were officially at war from 1948 until the 1994 treaty.”<sup>23</sup> Another cooperation effort, the Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) is a regional organization of Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian environmentalists that work on trans-boundary environmental issues as a tool for peace building. Mr. Gidon Bromber, the Israeli director of Friends of the Earth Middle East, says “All our water resources are shared and how one side manages water issues directly impacts the lives of the other side. . . . [we] must be working together to solve common water problems.”<sup>24</sup> Countries recognize the importance of cooperation on environmental issues. In fact, RAND Corporation, a nonprofit research organization, in their book, “Building a Successful Palestinian State” discusses many nation-building issues to include

public health, education, and population growth. Among these critical issues, water is one of the requirements to the nation-building equation.<sup>25</sup> A potential program in the region could address the Eastern Mediterranean and/or the Jordan River and could include Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. Turkey or Jordan might be a regional partner in this program. The Southern Mediterranean is another region nearby that could include North African nations such as Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Egypt.

Another region in which the successful lessons of BALTDEC could be applied to improve defense environmental cooperation is Southern Africa. The region has a cooperation effort in place for community issues called the Southern African Development Community (SADC). The Member States of SADC are Angola, Botswana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Swaziland, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.<sup>26</sup> In fact, one of the foundations for cooperation in the Southern African region was producing a protocol on water.<sup>27</sup> One of SADC's priorities is the "promotion of integrated management of transboundary water resources for regional integration and development." In an attempt to fulfill this priority, SADC sponsored a program called Waternet in which SADC worked with the support of the Netherlands government and the University of Zimbabwe on training in Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM). In addition, SADC is studying the coordination of the water resources of the Congo River Basin.<sup>28</sup>

The South China Sea is an interesting region to consider. The countries around its ancient trade routes include Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. Environmental issues combine with economic, military and political changes to make this a complex but very interesting region. China would be the obvious regional partner for the US, providing opportunities for improved cooperation and relations, as well as with the other countries in the region.

In each of these regions suggested for new projects, the US would not be starting from scratch. There is already some level of regional environmental cooperation, but there is the opportunity to expand the cooperation into the defense arena. US defense international environmental cooperation programs are already reaching out to countries in many areas of the world as diverse as Azerbaijan, Greenland, Southern Africa, and Ukraine. While funding for these programs is very small in the context of the US defense budget, these small investments have the potential for significant dividends in building new alliances.<sup>29</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

The environment, by its nature, is a topic that crosses national borders. Most countries are interested in cooperating on environmental issues, even if there is friction surrounding other issues. Therefore, environmental assistance acts as a starting point for international relationships, helping to shape existing and emerging alliances as it is almost universally appreciated and viewed positively by the public. Environmental assistance acts as a tool for fostering military-civilian cooperation, building relationships among nations. The main tool in implementing the environmental cooperation has been training, but there are several other environmental assistance opportunities. Despite all the progress made, there are many more training needs and opportunities on a wide range of topics in the Baltic region and other regions. For example, the latest version of the “Baltic Basics” inventory lists dozens of short and long-term needs including, environmental considerations in the acquisition process, environmental impact assessment regulations and procedures, mine harbor clean-up, hazardous material management, air quality monitoring, and noise management, among many others.<sup>30</sup>

Once these relationships begin to mature, environmental issues become the “front door” to expanding interactions into other areas to include national security. The Baltic Defense environmental cooperation effort, with only a small investment, continues to improve interoperability, communication, stability and good will towards the Baltic region and the US. Through our involvement, the US has learned many environmental lessons that can be shared with other regions in order to increase cooperation efforts in the defense sector. There are many opportunities for defense environmental assistance in other regions around the world where the US can offer significant help, yielding new cooperation and alliances. Regional cooperation, nurtured by defense environmental programs, can contribute to regional stability and US national interests.

## ENDNOTES

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- <sup>20</sup> Ibid. See the AMEC website (<https://www.denix.osd.mil/denix/Public/Intl/AMEC/amec.html>) for more information.
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